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# HISTORICAL SKETCH

of the

Park Region about McGregor, Iowa  
and Prairie Du Chien, Wisconsin



By

Althea R. Sherman



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and Prairie Du Chien, Wisconsin

Althea R. Sherman  
National, Iowa

Illustrations from photographs by A. A. Horning  
P. J. Clark and the author



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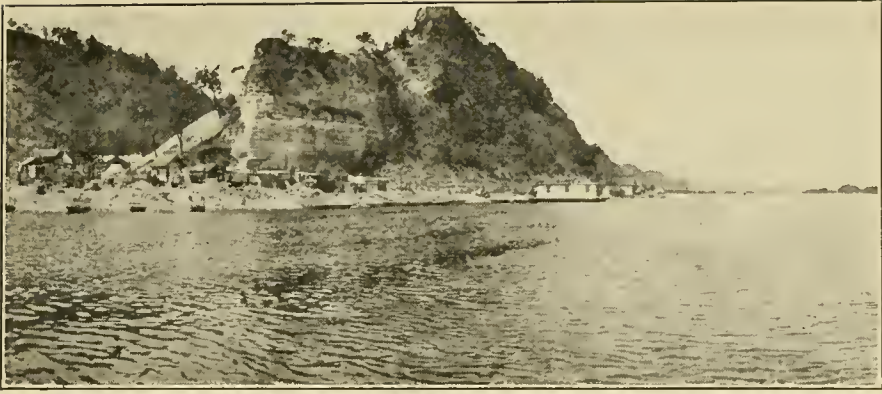


SKETCH MAP OF UPPER MISSISSIPPI VALLEY

OCT 13 1919

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PICTURESQUE FORMATIONS SHOWING EFFECTS OF  
EROSION

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE PARK REGION  
ABOUT MCGREGOR, IOWA, AND PRAIRIE  
DU CHIEN, WISCONSIN\*

ANY extended account of the chief points of interest either in the human history or the natural history of the region about McGregor, Iowa, and Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, would fill large volumes, hence this short narrative can serve as an introduction only, but an introduction which may lead to a wider and a valued acquaintance it is hoped.

The homely comparison, "as old as the hills," is supposed to suggest the limit of antiquity, nevertheless there are things older than the hills in the region under our consideration, that excite decided interest; that may be exhibited to visitors as things worth seeing; that should be counted among the many claims of a spot that has been deemed suitable for one of our national parks. Since the attractions, that are older than the hills, had their origin when the foundation rocks of the hills were formed, it seems best to begin at the beginning and first to speak of its geological history.

If by chance you mention this region to the paleontologist, he recalls it as the home of the Trenton limestone, which is exceedingly rich in the fossil remains of certain

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brachiopods, gasteropods, and cephalopods, some of which have been pronounced to be forms new to science. The geologist in turn speaks of it as a portion of the "driftless area," and he will tell you of his abiding interest in this region, because it remained an island in the sea of ice, which submerged the surrounding country during the glacial epoch; that to this insular situation are due some of the attractive features of its rugged scenery; that the picturesque, castle-like piles of rock with their fantastic pinnacles and bartizans, cut out by erosion of wind and water, still stand because they were free from the grinding, leveling forces of the mantle of ice, which smoothed the surface of the earth in adjacent territory; that here the Mississippi river flows through



*Photo by Horning*

#### THE HEIGHTS, MCGREGOR

its old channel cut by its water, ages before the glaciers came. If the geologist be one who is intimately acquainted with this locality, he will refer to the fine display of St. Peter sandstone, called Pictured Rocks, situated a short distance below McGregor. Such a geologist was Dr. W J McGee, a native of Farley, Iowa, one of Iowa's most illustrious sons, and one of America's



most eminent scientists. In his "Pleistocene History of Northeastern Iowa" he has given this description:

"Sometimes the sands are snow-white and under the summer sun dazzle the eye of the beholder; again, they are cream-tinted or yellowish or gray or buff; sometimes dingy brown prevails, elsewhere red appears in bands and irregular streaks and blotches, then blue-blacks and rich greens come in, and sometimes the stratification is marked off with a gaudy succession of all these colors; and in the 'Painted Rocks' near McGregor the cliffs are banded, mottled, and fancifully figured in harlequin coats of gorgeous red, brilliant yellow, dazzling white, deep blue, jet black, vivid green, rich brown, and an endless variety of mixed tones and shades, and in endless variety of patterns. Here the color-loving aborigines gathered, and their tumuli and temples crown the summits, and their implements and weapons crowd the talus-flanked bases of the gorgeously painted walls; and here flock the pleasure-seeking whites to marvel at the glory, enjoy the grandeur and symmetry of form, and revel in the delicious coolness of glens shaded by luxuriant foliage and tempered by refreshing springs."

The geological history of these hills is written everywhere on their rocks, but for most of us this writing needs interpreters. Of such were Dr. David Dale Owen, Professors James Hall, Samuel Calvin, T. C. Chamberlin, R. D. Salisbury, and Dr. W J McGee. From their interpretations the remote antiquity of our hills is made clear: that our oldest rocks, the Saint Croix sandstone (formerly known as Potsdam sandstone) were deposited in earliest Palæozoic time, when life first appeared on the earth, something like sixty million years ago; and that this formation was succeeded by the Oneota limestone (formerly called Lower Magnesian limestone), followed by Saint Peter sandstone and Trenton limestone. To the storms of wind and water that for millions of years have eroded the surfaces of the dolomite formations are attributed the picturesque sculpturings of cliffs and crags that call forth words of admiration from

matter-of-fact scientists. This testimonial comes by letter from Professor Paul Bartsch:

“I know of no stretch that has more picture qualities per acre in the entire river region, than your chosen site. I have canoed and motor-boated the entire Mississippi from St. Paul to the lower flats, and therefore feel qualified to speak.”

Whether superior or not the landscape remains for each man's judgment. The views here presented can not vary much from those that first greeted the eyes of primitive man, and so they will remain for ages to come, if the destructive hand of mankind is stayed from ruthless waste.

The many Indian mounds to be found in this region attract the attention of the archæologist. At the same time the malacologist in his study of the living mollusk seeks here the vast beds of fresh-water mussels. Not until a thorough survey of the flora and avifauna of the region has been made will it be possible to speak with exactness regarding the number of species. In some parts of the woods and by the roadsides wild flowers are abundant, but some beautiful prairie species, known to the early settlers, have disappeared.

Ornithologists pronounce the Mississippi Valley one of America's best fields for bird study, especially during migration days. The many islands in the neighborhood of the mouth of the Wisconsin River offer attractive resting-places for migratory water-birds. The inclusion of these islands within a national park makes of them a perpetual bird sanctuary, greatly needed. Such a haven is exactly in line with a noteworthy undertaking that in recent years in Louisiana has secured the setting aside of 400,000 acres of marsh land as wild life refuges. This enterprise has been termed “the great McIlhenny project.” Of it a writer in *Bird-Lore* has said:

“Mr. McIlhenny feels that what has been done should be considered only the beginning of a series of reservations for migratory birds, that should extend northward through the Mississippi Basin and onward to northwest-





*Photo by Clark*

## BEULAH FALLS



ern Canada. The project is a big one, but well worth while."

The physical features of this region were formative factors in its early human history. The Wisconsin River from time immemorial had formed a part of nature's thoroughfare by which the Indians had traveled over their customary canoe route from the East to the Mississippi River. This well-known route began on the St. Lawrence River, proceeded up the Ottawa River, crossed the great inland seas to Green Bay, struggled over the sinuous course of the Fox River to the narrow portage between that river and the Wisconsin, down which it held its way to the Father of Waters. Arriving on the banks of the great river, north of the mouth of the Wisconsin River the Indians found a long, narrow prairie admirably suited for encampment. To it they resorted annually for tribal intercourse, for barter, and for games of ball.

One ball game played at Prairie du Chien on Sunday, April 20, 1806, between the Sioux on one side and the Sac and Fox Indians on the opposing side was witnessed by Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike, and briefly described by him. A much fuller, clearer account of these Indian ball games has been given us by the artist, George Catlin, in his "Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indian." He appears to have been a zealous ball fan, and declares that he never missed a game that he could possibly attend by riding twenty or thirty miles to it. Seated upon horseback he would watch a game from its start about nine o'clock in the morning until its finish near the hour of sunset. Of attendance at ball games he says:

"It is no uncommon occurrence for six or eight hundred or a thousand of these young men to engage in a game of ball with five or six times that number of spectators of men, women, and children, surrounding the ground and looking on."

In the game played at Prairie du Chien and described by Lieutenant Pike the players numbered only two or

three hundred men, of whom the Sioux were the victors, and he adds: "more I believe from the superiority of their skill in throwing the ball than by their swiftness, for I thought the Puants and Reynards the swiftest runners."

Arrangements for a game were made three or four months in advance, and the players were chosen with customary ceremonies. Bets amounting in value to several thousand dollars were staked on the day preceding the game. Regarding this Catlin says:

"The betting was all done across this line, and seemed to be chiefly left to the women, who seemed to have marshalled out a little of everything that their houses and fields possessed: Goods and chattels, knives, dresses, blankets, pots and kettles, dogs, and horses, and guns; and all were placed in the possession of the *stake-holders*, who sat by them, and watched them all night, preparatory to the play."

A dance occupied the entire night preceding the game, which Catlin pronounced to be "one of the most picturesque scenes imaginable." Of it he says:

"The ground having been all prepared, and preliminaries all settled, and the betting all made, and goods all 'staked,' night came on without the appearance of any players on the grounds. But soon after dark, a procession of lighted flambeaux was seen coming from each encampment to the ground, where the players assembled around their respective byes; and at the beat of drum and chants of the women, each party of players commenced the 'ball-play dance.' Each party danced for a quarter of an hour around their respective byes in their ball-play dress, rattling their ball-sticks together in the most violent manner, and all singing as loud as they could raise their voices, whilst the women of each party, who had their goods at stake, formed into two rows on the line between the two parties of players, and danced also in uniform step, and all their voices joined in chants to the Great Spirit, in which they were soliciting his favor in deciding the game to their advan-



tage, and also encouraging the players to exert every power they possessed in the struggle that was to ensue. In the meantime four old *medicine-men*, who were to have the starting of the ball, and who were to be judges of the play, were seated at the point where the ball was to be started, and busily smoking to the Great Spirit for their success in judging aright and impartially between the parties in so important an affair."

After a night of such vigils ensued the great contest that taxed the full measure of strength, skill, and endurance of several hundred naked, howling savages during a period of nine or ten hours. Descriptions of the game give one the impression that it combined features to be found in baseball, foot-ball, and tennis. The red man found the prairie lying north of the mouth of the Wisconsin River well suited for his game of ball, and here, doubtless, he came to play it for centuries before the advent of the white man.

The first coming of white men to this region was on June 17, 1673, when Louis Joliet, the explorer, with Father James Marquette among his companions, reached the goal of his arduous search, and at the mouth of the Wisconsin River saw before him the waters and rugged shores of the great, unknown river he was seeking. The transports of delight that must have filled the hearts of these brave voyagers upon this first view by white men of the Mississippi River were not dwelt upon by Father Marquette, but in this single phrase "with a joy I can not express," he summed up his own emotions. Without waste of words he closed his account of the most important event in the Upper Mississippi Valley: an occasion for which he found that words were inadequate.

It should be remembered by everyone that all careful historians speak of the discovery of the Mississippi River as the accomplishment of Joliet and Marquette, always keeping in mind that Joliet was the man whom Frontenac sent in search of the "Great River of the West;" that Joliet was obliged to winter at Mackinac, where he found Marquette, who with him completed the journey



and became its historian for which he deserves due honor; but his position in the undertaking was secondary, therefore simple, every-day justice requires the placing of Joliet's name first, and it is robbing him to call it Marquette's expedition or discovery.

For nearly two hundred years after the white man reached the Upper Mississippi River the mouth of the Wisconsin River was a pivotal point for the traveler. There the course of the early explorers and traders coming westward by the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers route



*Photo by Clark*

## HANGING ROCK

swung either to the north or to the south. It was considered a strategic point also. Governor William Clark said of it: "Whoever holds Prairie du Chien holds the Upper Mississippi." It seems to have been an acceptance of this view that led early explorers to establish forts at this place. The first of these was built in 1683 by the illustrious and gallant Robert de La Salle, and the second soon afterward by Nicholas Perrot.

The history of Perrot's achievements ought to be better known by the present inhabitants of the region wherein he once held sway for his accomplishment was most remarkable; his exploits sometimes bordered on the spectacular. At the outset his title "Commandant of the West" captures our fancy. That he should have been sent with an army of forty men to hold so vast a territory excites our astonishment; that with this small number of Frenchmen he built forts in various places and held for several years all the region of the northwest for his country and his king to the entire satisfaction of his superiors commands our admiration. To a research study by Gardiner P. Stickney, which was published in the Parkman Club Papers (1896), we are indebted for the most extended history of Nicholas Perrot, concerning whom he wrote:

"His name is continually found in the records of Canada from 1665 to 1700 and always in honorable, often in important, connection. His influence with the Indians was unequalled, even Du Lhut being obliged at one time to call for his assistance."

Stickney describes him as:

"The most successful of all the French emissaries among the Western Indians. Perrot was a man of humble birth. So unimportant did he seem that neither his parentage, the place of his birth, nor the year of his arrival in New France is matter of record so far as recent research has been possible to ascertain."

The year of Perrot's birth was 1644. In his youth for four or five years he was in the service of the missionaries, acting for them in the capacity of body-servant,

farm-hand, and hunter, until he reached his majority in 1665, when he for the first time came West. He visited the Pottawattamies and later the Fox Indians in their villages in eastern Wisconsin. The Foxes were then suffering from dire want, but Perrot's kindly tact won their regard so that the people of this proud and haughty tribe became his steadfast friends, and at one time saved him from being burned at the stake by the Miamis. Their friendship for him calls for greater astonishment, when it is remembered that for the French



RUINS OF FUR WAREHOUSE BUILT BY JOHN JACOB ASTOR

in general the Foxes cherished undying hatred. It throws a side-light on the rare character and ability of this man, who twenty years later took possession of the country as "Commandant of the West;" who held back the tribes from internecine warfare; who built stockaded trading posts, bought furs of the Indians and justly gained their lasting esteem. He even was "wept over" by the Sioux, and by the Ioway Indians. This unique ceremony consisted in saturating thoroughly his hair and clothing with the tears of the principal men of the tribe. Two stories told by Justin Winsor illustrate Per-



rot's method of outwitting the savages. One relates that when hostile Indians were lying in ambush to rob his camp, they were deterred by his showing of a superior force. This he secured by ordering his six companions to appear in frequently changed attires. The other story describes the strategy by which he induced some Sioux Indians to return stolen goods after threatening to burn up their marshes if they did not comply. To show his ability, he poured water into a cup, which unknown to them held brandy, that he set on fire.

The fort (or more correctly the stockaded trading post), built by Perrot at the mouth of the Wisconsin River, was named St. Nicholas. It is believed that its erection was not long after 1685. At this late date it is impossible to learn how much of his time the "Commandant of the West" spent at this post, or what thrilling scenes of his life were enacted here. It must suffice for us to know that the first white man to hold office in this region, and the first to spend any considerable portion of his time here was a masterful man, kindly of heart, versatile of wit, prompt in action, faithful in service, constant in friendship, and just in his dealings with the Indians. After his removal from office, the Indians in 1701 held a great council in Montreal, where they complained long and bitterly over their deprivation. Hebbard, in his "Wisconsin Under French Dominion," says of Nicholas Perrot:

"His last work was a memoir addressed to the colonial authorities, about 1716. It was an appeal, not for himself, but for wiser and more humane treatment of his old friends, the Foxes, then just beginning that tremendous revolt, which was to prove so disastrous to the French Dominion. With this kindly and characteristic act, the bowed figure of Perrot vanishes from the dimly lighted state of western history."

During the life-time of Perrot other noted explorers came into this portion of the Mississippi Valley among whom were Father Hennepin, Pierre le Sueur and Baron la Hontan. Both Le Sueur and Perrot made dis-

coveries of mineral wealth, and both made journeys to France to secure licenses to work the mines they had found. Perrot's discovery was of lead in the vicinity of Galena, Illinois, and Le Sueur, having ascended the Mississippi River in 1700, found lead in the lower and upper fields, and copper farther north.

In time Fort St. Nicholas, the trading post of Perrot, fell into disuse and decay for no permanent white settlement was made at Prairie du Chien until the year 1781,



RUINS OF THE HOSPITAL OF OLD FORT CRAWFORD AT  
PRAIRIE DU CHIEN

when three Frenchmen, Giard, Ange, and Antaya made it their home. After the Louisiana Purchase the government of the United States sent Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike to explore the Upper Mississippi Valley and to select locations suitable for military posts. He, too, recognized the strategic value of the region at the mouth of the Wisconsin River, but a fort was not begun at Prairie du Chien until 1813. It was named Fort Shelby, and was renamed Fort McKay the following year after having been captured by the British, who held it several



months. Not long after their evacuation of it this fort was burned. On its site in 1816 another fort was built, and in honor of the Secretary of the Treasury it was named Fort Crawford. Ten years later for sanitary reasons a new fort was erected in another part of the town, that was garrisoned for thirty years. Government ownership of it ceased in 1864. Prairie du Chien was associated with many notable men and events during the military occupation of Fort Crawford. Once for several years its commanding officer was Colonel Zachary Taylor (afterward President Taylor), and one of his lieutenants was Jefferson Davis, who later became his son-in-law, contrary to his wishes. To this frontier outpost came men, remembered for their contributions to scientific knowledge: such were Dr. Beaumont, Thomas Nuttall, and Henry R. Schoolcraft; and there came also George Catlin, the artist, and as commissioners in Indian affairs such men as Generals William Clark and Lewis Cass, Major Lawrence Taliaferro, and Thomas L. McKenney.

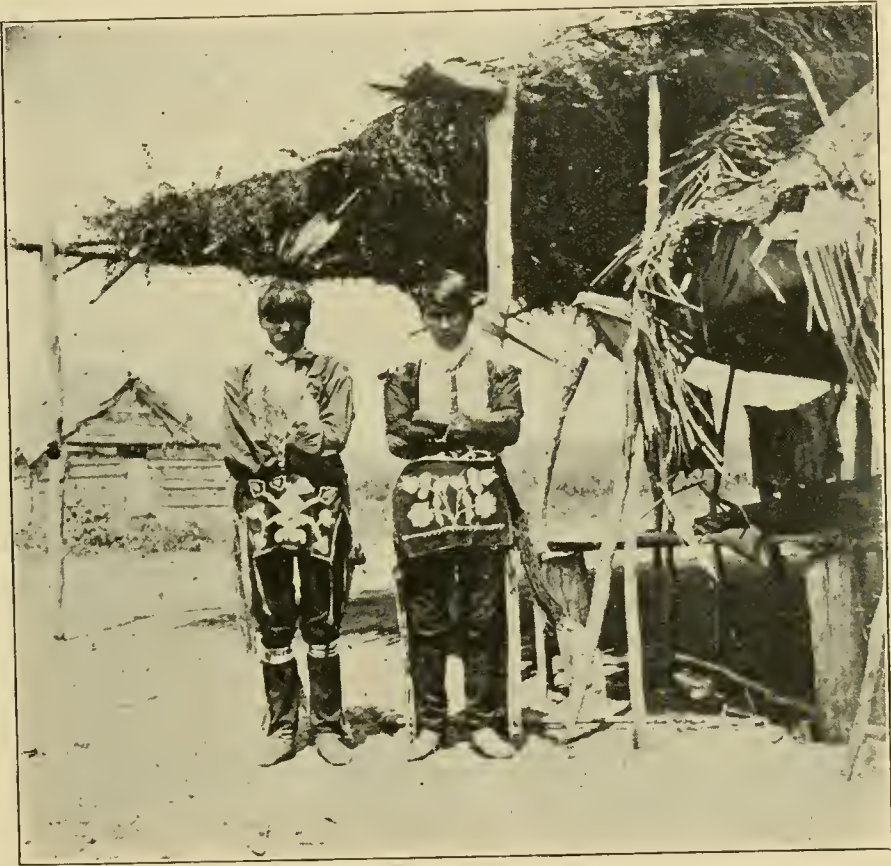
For a correct appreciation of the treaty-making councils held at Prairie du Chien it is necessary to understand the early history of the Indians who occupied this region at the time of the white man's appearance on the scene. The hunting-grounds of the Winnebagoes extended south to the Wisconsin River; the allied tribe of Sacs and Foxes claimed the land on the east side of the Mississippi that lies between the Wisconsin and Rock Rivers, together with all the land now comprised in the state of Iowa and the northern portion of Missouri; while the Sioux were war-lords over most of the present state of Minnesota and the Dakotas. In disposition the Winnebagoes were decidedly more peaceful than the neighboring tribes.

Some of these patient mound builders of Wisconsin have evinced artistic and poetic conceptions of a quality unsuspected in savage minds. A single example will serve to illustrate: The chieftancy of the tribe once resided in a woman. She bore the name of Glory of the Morning. Did parents of any tongue at any time in

the world's history choose a more beautiful name for a beloved daughter? Recall if you please a morning in June with the newly risen sun giving comforting warmth, with the air freighted with the perfume of flowers, bringing to the ear the joyous songs of many birds, and with the fresh green leaves glistening with dew-drops. With the glory of such a morning in mind, can you imagine a prettier name for a cherished child, a winsome girl, or a charming young woman? Besides, there was a measure of appropriateness in the name for the bearer, when she became old and unattractive, since then she could be called simply "Old Glory." This queen of the Winnebagoes married a Frenchman, whose name has been spelled variously: De Karie, De Carry, De-ca-ri, De Kaury, Du Corre and De Cora, but we know it best as Decorah. Her husband returned to Canada and in fighting his country's battles fell, mortally wounded, in 1760. The living descendants of this couple are numerous, and an exalted appreciation of nature still survives in at least one of their number, who has been recognized as an artist of merit, and whose writings have been published in the highest class of magazines under her maiden name of Angel De Cora.

The investigator pursuing a research study of the Sae and Fox Indians is fortunate in finding a great wealth of material. What has been written concerning them fills volumes. As a starter for a list of such volumes, one may mention Black Hawk's autobiography, dictated by him to Antoine Le Claire, then there might follow Heberd's "Wisconsin under French Dominion," in which he argues that the downfall of the rule of the French in America was greatly accelerated by the blows dealt them by the Fox Indians. The collections of writings known as the "Jesuit Relations" abound in reference to the Saes and Foxes. They were in the lime-light of public attention when Catlin and Lewis were portraying Indians on canvas, and word pictures of them have been left us by Schoolcraft, McKenney, Pike, and a host of other writers.

According to Black Hawk's story, the Sacs once lived in the vicinity of Quebec and were driven westward by the hostility of neighboring tribes; the Foxes, too, came from the east, and are supposed to have been of Iroquois origin. After an alliance was formed between these tribes their war strength grew to such proportions that they were soon carrying their victorious arms against the Illinois tribe and usurping the latter's domain.

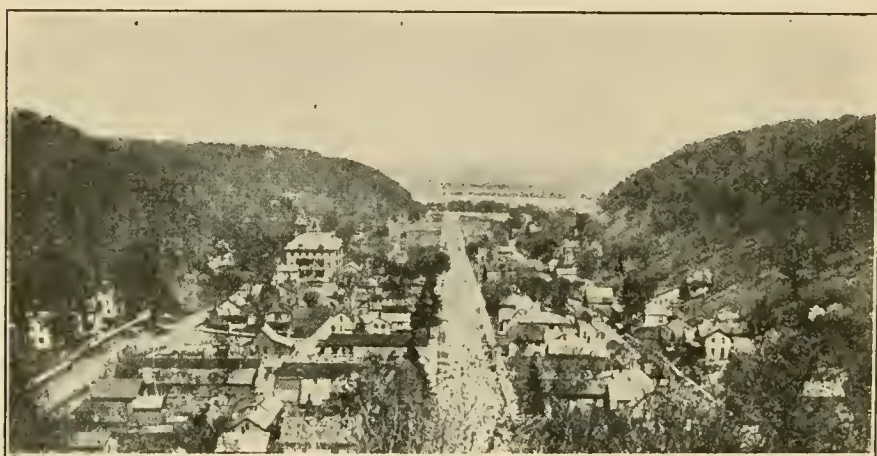


YOUNG SAC AND FOX INDIANS IN THEIR HOLIDAY ATTIRE

They lived on friendly terms with the Winnebagoes, but perpetual enmity existed between them and the Sioux, because of a lack of agreement regarding the boundaries of their respective hunting-grounds. It was for the purpose of settling boundary disputes between warring tribes that the Indians of the Upper Mississippi Valley were summoned to a great council at Prairie du Chien in August of 1825.



It is sometimes erroneously stated that the buying of land from the Indians was the object of the council of 1825 and another important one in 1830, also held at Prairie du Chien, whereas both related entirely to boundary matters of interest to the tribes of Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and a part of Illinois. The discerning historian very correctly has styled the treaty ratified at the council of 1825 as "the celebrated treaty." It is believed that the gathering was the most imposing of any at a treaty-making council. At all events it is the one of which we have the fullest accounts, for Schoolcraft was present and wrote vivid descriptions of the



*Photo by Horning*

THE TOWN OF MCGREGOR NOW STANDS IN THE COULEE  
DES SIOUX: THE PLACE OF ENCAMPMENT OF THE SACS  
AND FOXES AND THE IOWAY INDIANS IN 1825

various scenes he witnessed, and the treaty, as published, furnishes us with the names of the Indian signers. In addition to this is the "Indian Biography," written by Thomas L. McKenney, who visited the place two years later, and George Catlin painted the portraits of many of these Indian participants of whom McKenney has left us the word pictures. No other event in Indian history seems to have been so well recorded, none other offers such a mass of material for correct reproduction in moving pictures or for pageantry. The first centennial

anniversary of the great council might very appropriately be celebrated in 1925 by pageants.

To the meeting at Prairie du Chien in the summer of 1825 there came not only the chiefs and principal men of the tribes, but their families, and all others who cared to attend. The whole prairie, five or six miles in length, was covered with their tepees and wickinups. This space being insufficient, the islands in the river were filled with Indian encampments, and on the Iowa side of the Mississippi in a narrow valley (then called the Coulee des Sioux), where the town of McGregor now stands, the Sacs and Foxes and the Ioways had pitched their lodges. These tribes were the last to arrive, and their coming had been marked by spectacular demonstrations. In their canoes, which were lashed together, they stood, decorated and painted with greatest care, singing their war-song as time after time they passed the encampment of their enemy, the Sioux.

Many a town or county in the Upper Mississippi Valley bears today the name of some prominent Indian, who was present at that council. Some names have been translated into English, some have been changed in spelling, while others are written exactly as they appeared in the signed treaty. A few of the names that have been perpetuated are Wabasha, Sleepy Eye, Red Wing, Shakopee, Decorah, Winneshiek, Waukon, Tama, Keokuk, Wapello, Poweshiek, and Mahaska.

No evidence has been found to show that the noted Black Hawk was present at the council of 1825. He may have been on his regular visit to his "British Fathers" at Malden, where he went annually for presents and to plot with them against his white neighbors; but there was no lack of other imposing characters among the red men. Of such was Ap-pa-noose, a hereditary chieftain, whose Indian idea of propriety did not restrain him from saying that he was a very fine man, quite the equal of any one; of such also was Mon-datonga, the great athlete, whose feats of strength, endurance, and bravery were most extraordinary. To this



council there came Wau-cau-che, a man of inferior mold, unpleasing of face, without repute as a warrior, yet the possessor of sterling good sense and of such sound judgment, that he ranked high in the councils of his tribe. And Keokuk was there — even then how Black Hawk hated him! — Keokuk, the resolute leader, whom the young men adored; the able counselor, whom the old men applauded. Keokuk, the bold warrior, whose flashing eye never quailed before a foe; the dashing rider, whose horse was the finest in the whole West. Keokuk, the silver-tongued, whose eloquence turned all hearts whither he listed; whose prudent counsels kept his band from participating in the Black Hawk War. Keokuk, the courtly chieftain, whose fine personality captivated the fancy and won the admiration of every white man he met; whose character justified the appellation of “the noble red man.”



*Photo by Horning*

#### WHERE THE WATER LILIES GROW

There came to this council from the far distant shores of the Sault Ste. Marie the head chief of the Chippewas, Shin-gau-ba W'Ossin, who although threatened with

blindness, failed not to be at hand to wield his great influence for the welfare of his people. Because this gathering was within their own borders the Winnebagoes could attend in great numbers. Among their leading men, whose names appear upon the treaty were three of the De-ca-ri family, a son, and two grandsons of Glory of the Morning. The names of the latter, as written, were Watch-kat-o-que, the Big Canoe, and Wakun-haga, Snake-skin. They probably had several wives apiece as was the Indian custom, but that they out-Mormoned the Latter Day Saints with twenty-one and eleven wives respectively seems to have been a decided exaggeration. One striking figure in this tribe was Naw-kaw, who at the age of ninety was still erect, muscular, and fond of fine clothes. Their hereditary chief should have led the Sioux Indians, but because of the disrepute into which he had fallen, leadership had passed to Wabasha, Wannata, and other sub-chiefs.

At length all had arrived. Upon the east side of the Mississippi above the village of Prairie du Chien were located the conical-shaped tepees of the Sioux, their coverings of whitened buffalo skins decorated with various hieroglyphies made a bright picture. Near them were placed the elliptical lodges, covered with mats of birch bark, that belonged to the Chippewas. South of the village and on the islands were encamped the Menominees, Ottawas, Pottawattamies, and Winnebagoes, while across the Mississippi were the Ioways and the Saes and Foxes. The braves vied with each other in personal embellishment, and their completed toilets showed them with their bodies painted in variegated hues; with their heads shaven except for a lock upon the top to which was fastened a tuft of horse-hair, dyed bright red; with their ears pierced in several places bearing various ornaments, such as strings of beads, bells, heads of birds, and tails of foxes; withal, their war-bonnets of feathers, and their beautifully wrought calumets of red pipe-stone, decorated with the brilliant plumage of birds added to their gorgeous appearance. The squaws, too, were not want-

ing in a certain magnificence of dress; besides garments of skin embroidered as handsomely as were the robes of their husbands, some of them wore dresses made of costly stuffs, woven by white hands. Such a garment belonged to the favorite wife of Keokuk, "the upper portion of it being almost literally covered with silver brooches."

The council was held in an immense booth covered with the branches of trees. On a raised bench sat the members of the commission, and near them were stationed the officers and soldiers of Fort Crawford. Behind them were seated the wives of the officers and other ladies of Prairie du Chien. Facing this small assemblage of white people was the great concourse of red men. In the first semi-circle were the chiefs and principal men, behind them the less important people, including the women and children. The much vexed questions concerning their boundaries were discussed with passionate zeal. Of the Saes and Foxes, who felt themselves especially aggrieved, Schoolcraft wrote: "Their martial bearing, their high tone, and whole behavior during their stay, in and out of council, was impressive, and demonstrated in an eminent degree to what a high pitch of physical and moral courage, bravery and success in war may lead a savage people. Keokuk, who led them, stood with his war lance, his high crest of feathers, and daring eye, like another Coriolanus, and when he spoke in council and at the same time shook his lance at his enemies, the Sioux, it was evident that he wanted but an opportunity to make their blood flow like water. Wapello and other chiefs backed him, and the whole array with their shaved heads and high crests of horse-hair, told the spectators plainly, that each of these men held his life in his hands, and was ready to spring to the work of slaughter at the cry of his chief."

After weeks of strenuous laboring with the various tribes a treaty was signed on August 19, which fixed a boundary line between the Sioux and the allied tribes of Saes and Foxes. Its description was: "Commencing at the mouth of the Upper Iowa River and ascending said





river to its west fork; thence up the fork to its source; thence crossing to the fork of the Red Cedar River in a direct line to the second or upper fork of the Des Moines River; thence in a direct line to the lower fork of the Calumet River, and down that river to its junction with the Missouri River." The commissioners, pleased with the thought that there need be no more warfare over disputed hunting-grounds, departed for their homes and the Indians dispersed. But a well-defined boundary line was little hindrance to scalp-taking on part of Sioux, or of Sacs and Foxes. Five years later all the tribes were again summoned to a general council at Prairie du Chien. Again they gathered in multitudes; again savage finery was flaunted, and savage throats were filled with defiant yells; again savage drums were beaten, and spears were brandished at the hated foe; and again the wise arguments of the commissioners prevailed. On their part the Sioux ceded to the United States a tract of land, twenty miles wide, north of the boundary line, and the Sacs and Foxes a corresponding area south of that line. This tract was known as the "Neutral Strip." But a neutral strip forty miles wide did not serve to keep apart these inveterate foes. Two years later their tribal hostilities were interrupted by the breaking out of the Black Hawk War. As reparation for losses sustained in that war the United States exacted from the Sacs and Fox Indians the relinquishment of the eastern portion of Iowa.

Previous to 1832, our government kept a watchful ward over these acres of the Indians. One of the principal field duties of the soldiers stationed at Fort Crawford was to hunt out the unscrupulous white men, who unlawfully crossed to the west side of the Mississippi River. The manner of the coming of the white settlers into the area under consideration differed not at all from that into the neighboring regions, but it did differ from that into some portions of the United States, inasmuch as it was less arduous. Pioneers traveled by steamboat over the Great Lakes to Milwaukee or Chicago, or

down the Ohio and up the Mississippi River to some landing place, thence by horse or ox team to their destinations. Rarely did they make the entire journey from the East by wagon. The few foreign immigrants who came did so mostly by the way of New Orleans. All this refers to the true pioneers; for those who came to this region after 1850 cannot truthfully be ranged as pioneers. The facilities of easy water transportation brought the necessities and many of the comforts of life within reach of the enterprising pioneer, but the lazy and shiftless did without the comforts and sometimes the necessities then, even as they do now.

In early days changes came slowly. The first railway, that reached Prairie du Chien in the spring of 1857, marked the beginning of many changes. Since then two



#### MUSSEL FISHING

important industries, lumber-rafting and mussel-fishing, have had their rise and fall. In recent years there may be seen occasionally the flat-bottomed boat of a lone mussel-fisherman, locally called a "clammer," such as formerly dotted the river by the hundreds. With his four-pronged, "crowfoot" grapple he drags the bottom of the



river and hooks unlucky mussels resting thereon: the deerhorn, butterfly, sand shell, niggerhead, and mucket, all valuable for button-making, besides many other species worthless for that purpose. In years past these unsalable shells, cast away on the shores of the Mississippi, paved them to a depth of a foot or more with their beautiful iridescent coverings. In those days one needed not to die and go to heaven in order to walk the pearly streets.

For the fisher of mussels there is ever the lure of the pearl, since almost any lowly mussel may conceal within its mantle a pearl of great price. An inventory of the pearls found in this region would make a most interesting list. Eighteen years ago a *Prairie du Chien* newspaper's report of the pearls found and sold in the month of May showed the neat receipts of \$25,000 therefrom. The great numbers found in the Mississippi River and its tributaries together with the high prices received for fine specimens are corroborative of the tales told by Father Zenobius Membre, De Soto, Sir Walter Raleigh, and other explorers, who spoke of the abundance and magnificence of the pearls possessed by the Indians of their day, though nothing then or now appears comparable with the story of Pliny, the elder, concerning Cleopatra's two pear-shaped pearls valued at \$400,000.

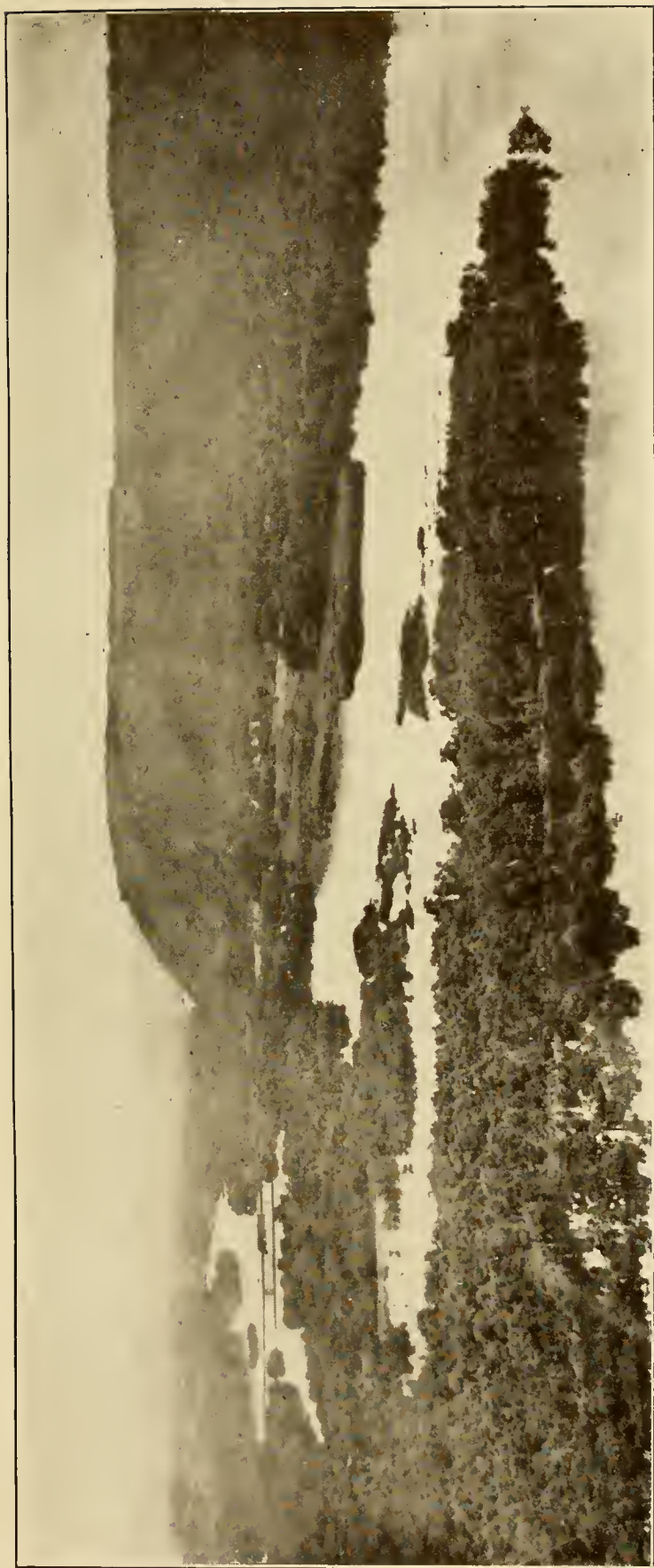
Beyond question numerous pearls have been found, that rivaled the famous Queen Pearl, weighing ninety-three grains, which was found in 1857 at Notch Brook, New Jersey, and sold to Empress Eugenie for \$2500, but afterward considered worth four times that amount. It is hazardous to affirm that a "clammer" has received \$5000 or \$6000 for a single pearl, as is sometimes claimed.

No locality appears to be free from preposterous stories. Some such fakes sprout and die from lack of cultivation, from want of that harrowing and stirring of the soil by which frequent repetition nurtures the mythical tale. Of this class was the story, started about forty years ago, to the effect that it was at *Prairie du Chien* that Dr. Beaumont made his remarkable experiments on

digestion in the case of Alexis St. Martin. The army records show that Dr. Beaumont was at Mackinaw in 1822, which accords with the accepted accounts of St. Martin's accident and treatment, but his nurse did move to Prairie du Chien some years later.

With no better foundation than the foregoing are two other bogus stories. One of them refers to the marriage of Miss Sarah Knox Taylor, a daughter of Zachary Taylor, to Jefferson Davis, which took place at Louisville, Kentucky, at the home of her aunt, and without the consent of her father. Based on her father's opposition to her marriage a story of an elopement was fabricated, that is still circulated even though the proofs against it are well known. For these proofs no better witness is needed than Jefferson Davis, himself, who has stated that he was at Fort Gibson, Arkansas, on the day that Miss Taylor left Prairie du Chien by steamer under the care of the captain of the vessel. Before its departure, to her father, who was on the boat transacting some regimental business, she made a final, but fruitless, appeal for his consent to her marriage. Some of us can remember, when the elopement story was started at the time of the Civil War, and that it took by surprise old-time residents of Prairie du Chien, who had lived there twenty-five or more years.

Of all the fakes perhaps the "Black Hawk Tree" is the most ridiculous. If the origin of this travesty could be hunted to its lair, it most likely would be found in the "dark room" of some hustling photographer bent on making salable post cards, but he failed to invent a plausible theory for Black Hawk's hiding in a tree at Prairie du Chien. In his autobiography Black Hawk mentions no such shady retreat. No evidence can be found of his attendance at the treaty-making council of 1825, or that of 1830. The only important occasion known on which he visited Prairie du Chien was in 1832 after his war on the whites, and his defeat at Battle Island, which lies a short distance south of the village of Victory. At that time he was brought a prisoner to Fort



*Photo by Clark*

AN IDEAL BIRD REFUGE AMONG ISLANDS AT THE MOUTH OF THE WISCONSIN RIVER





Crawford by Big Canoe, called One-eyed Decorah, the grandson of Glory of the Morning. Before delivering his prisoner it is improbable that One-eyed Decorah permitted him to indulge in arboreal ascents even for a pastime; and after Black Hawk's release there was no incentive for him to hide or to resort to acrobatic stunts that would tax the agility of a man in his sixty-sixth year.

From a history abounding in important and interesting events only an item here and there has been selected, nevertheless it is a history well worth more extended recital, and one far too unfamiliar to all. Because our school histories are written in the East our school-children learn that without special quest for it Henry Hudson discovered the river that bears his name, but they fail to hear of Louis Joliet, who was commissioned to seek and find the "Father of Waters," and who faithfully executed his commission amid manifold hardships and dangers. The story of Captain John Smith is familiar to every school-boy, but Nicholas Perrot, a man of vastly greater influence in shaping the history of our nation, who was twice condemned to death by Indians, is a character of whom no mention is made. The council of peace held on the banks of the Delaware River to which were called the neighboring tribes of Indians by William Penn is ever duly narrated, but the many and exceedingly picturesque gatherings, not only for peace treaties, but also for land-purchases held at various places on the banks of the Mississippi River have been allowed to slip into undeserved obscurity.

It is a noble plan to offer to tired humanity attractive spots for rest and recreation, to preserve beautiful scenery, and to commemorate heroic deeds. Public parks in the vicinity of Prairie du Chien and McGregor will do all these things and they both could and should do vastly more. The scientific assets of the locality make it a field for constant discoveries though the name Discovery Park may never be chosen in commemoration of the discovery of the Mississippi River. A few years ago at Prairie du

Chien there was discovered by Father Muckermann a subspecies of the amazon ants, which has been named *Polyergus bicolor*. Simultaneously with his discovery it was found for the first time (at Rockford, Illinois), by Professor William M. Wheeler, one of the most eminent myrmecologists of the whole world. Those who have their eyes open and are looking for the wonders of nature, for the new, the strange, the unusual, will find them even in the waste places of the earth. Though scientists have delighted to honor our region with their attention and have found it yielding rich harvests for their labors



MEMBERS OF THE SAC AND FOX TRIBE IN 1900

in it, though it may hold a host of unknown things still awaiting a discoverer, yet it is not for learned scientists that we need parks for discovery, but for the unlearned masses. While men, women, and children for their bodily welfare seek rest and recreation in the open country, where the air is fresh, the sky unobscured, the earth crowned with beautiful plant life, and the waters favorable for the sports of boating and fishing, at the same time their minds will be enriched with a better, a more

intimate acquaintanceship with nature, if a little help is furnished them.

It has been my privilege to suggest that a park in this region, which offers such lavish wealth of material for scientific study, should afford the advantages of an open air museum. Those of us who have visited Scandinavia will not forget the exhibition at Bygdo in Norway, nor the Skansen of Stockholm, Sweden. In accepting these as admirable patterns where better can we work them out? Where better can we preserve for coming generations a true presentation of the cabin with its furnishings of the early white settlers, the tepee of the Sioux, the wickiup of the Saes and Foxes, and the lodge of the Winnebagoes, than on the very acres where a hundred years ago these habitations were to be found?

In working out the Skansen idea of an open air museum even more than has been done in Stockholm could be done in this region, where the natural advantages are greater. Scientific labels for our trees would soon make our forty-three species known by name to visitors. Scientific labels placed here and there among the blooming wild flowers would make their correct names familiar, and people would cease calling the spring beauty a May-flower, and the wild columbine would no longer be dubbed a honeysuckle. Methods similar to those used about flying-cages in zoological parks could be employed to teach the identity of the two hundred or more species of birds to be found in this region. At my home in National, six miles from the Mississippi River, for the first time in ornithological history, the whole home life of five hole-nesting species of birds has been exposed to the watchful eyes of the curious. The same contrivances that have been successful in one place could be employed with similar success in another place eight or nine miles away. By means of mirrors and lenses the nest activities could be reflected and thrown on a screen for the instruction and amusement of a crowd of people, whose near approach to the nest would not be admissible. Of the five species of birds under consideration the Sereech



Owl and the Sparrow Hawk afford less amusement, but the domestic life of the Northern Flicker, or of the House Wren furnishes a melodrama of the most entertaining sort, in sharp contrast with the gentle, affectionate home life of the Chimney Swift.

Our country's need of many parks is manifest. Cities need many, but these usually must be of the formal, "keep-off-the-grass" sort. To these there should be added many more outside of large cities, where natural attractions are most pleasing; where the people may resort for the study of nature, and the freedom of out-of-doors



*Photo by Horning*

#### ON THE YELLOW RIVER

living; where the folklore and open air museum ideas can be worked out. Largely to the foresight and untiring zeal of the late Senator Robert Glenn of Wyalusing the world is indebted for the establishment by the State of Wisconsin of such a park at the mouth of the Wisconsin River. It preserves most interesting Indian mounds and possesses all the natural advantages that the foregoing pages have enumerated. The immense value of this praiseworthy accomplishment will be greatly enhanced if the acreage of this park is supplemented



by a similar reservation, which shall include islands in the Mississippi River and the Iowa bluffs opposite.

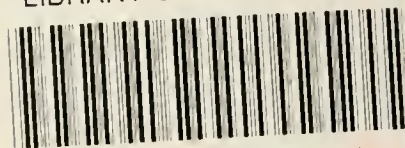
This project is one bespeaking the good-will and hearty coöperation of all, whether viewed from the standpoint of the historian, the pleasure-lover, the naturalist, or the conservationist. Moreover, the speechless creatures of the air, the earth, and the waters, signal to us to speak for them. National Parks mean the conservation of wild life. The McIlhenny idea emphasizes the value of a park in this chosen situation as a necessary resting-place for migratory birds. The need of the birds for this sanctuary of rest is pressing at this hour, even more pressing at present than are the needs of mankind for a recreational park, and the time seems ripe for action.

The establishment of such a park will in no wise affect the vocational or monetary interests of the majority of the people in the region about McGregor or Prairie du Chien. For a very few it may have slight advantages, and for others slight disadvantages, especially for those of us, whose work or study is best pursued "far from the madding crowd,"—but altruism hurts no one. It is clear that the span of life of no one is long; and it is equally clear that historical associations, beautiful scenery, scientific opportunity, and social betterment, all unite in pointing to the urgency of preserving this bit of unspoiled nature for the enjoyment of the generations yet to come.





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